

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Taunton Stove Company Inc.

Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership

TASCO Achieves ISO Certification

Client Profile:

TASCO Engineering, located in North Dighton, Massachusetts is a division of Taunton Stove, a fourth generation family business that is over sixty years old. TASCO is recognized as a leader in the precision metal fabricating and machining for the defense industry. The company has complete on-site facility capabilities including punching, forming, machining, painting, finishing and assembly. TASCO employs 35 people.

Situation:

TASCO was invited to attend a capstone event featuring suppliers who had participated in General Dynamic's Supply Chain Program. The commitment required that the company fund one-third of the program cost with the state and General Dynamics each paying a third. It was also explained that TASCO's participation did not ensure continued or additional work from General Dynamics. "I was a bit uncomfortable," added Bruce Godge, then Vice President of TASCO. "But when Rick Bowie, Project Manager for the Massachusetts Manufacturing Extension Partnership (MassMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, took several hours touring our facility, I decided to see what he and MassMEP could offer." When Bowie returned to TASCO with the findings of his assessment and suggestions for first steps, he had information that really illustrated the need for TASCO to make changes. "Bowie did classroom, hands on and shop floor work with us," said Bodge. "He was diligent about addressing our various cultural concerns. Bowie also knew it was important to show us instant results so our employees could clearly see and understand the benefits of the work we needed to do."

Solution:

MassMEP chose TASCO's shipping area for the first Kaizen event. The area was very cluttered with materials, parts, and old products. An employee team cleaned and reorganized the area. Items were sorted, thrown out or red tagged for later consideration. Shelves were built, everything was cleaned and labeled, locations were designated for specific purposes and tools designated to those areas. Visual signals indicate the need to reorder items. After witnessing the success in the shipping area, a TASCO employee took ownership of the storage area and started cleaning and organizing it. Now all the metal is sorted on racks with tags that indicate metal type, vendor, jobs used on and other pertinent information, which makes it easy to find and easy to track in case of quality or other issues. The employee then moved on to the stove storage room where he located an old computer and created an inventory tracking system. Bodge said, "Employees are creating their own work cells and bringing in their own tools. We have weekly meetings to talk about upcoming jobs and everyone is engaged and involved." Bodge added, "We did Value Stream Mapping (VSM) of the office to illustrate who did what. This experience has made me a better manager of the business with better ways of doing things and better ways of using our people." Bodge continued, "Due to cleaning and organizing, as our sales have increased our inventory has actually decreased and now we can control our costs!" As a result of MassMEP's assistance, the assembly and finish areas are now so streamlined that

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capacity has more than doubled. Controlled hardware inventory near the work stations eliminated excessive travel. Removing obstacles to improve flow from one station to the next and pre-kitting parts for some specific jobs have all improved efficiency. The work in process is lined up on the floor and visually shows where there are pockets of time for scheduling additional work. People are cross trained to step in where needed. Before and after photos posted in work areas remind employees of the standard.

MassMEP oversaw a VSM event of TASCOS internal order processing system. The team calculated that once an order was received, it took approximately two weeks of their eight week lead time for it to reach the shop floor. By identifying and removing waste in the process they were able to cut that down to two days. Members of General Dynamics purchasing and engineering departments were included in the report out on this event and participated in a problem solving session with TASCOS employees. The supplier/customer activity helped develop more of a partnership and open communication between the two. After they were well into their Lean process, TASCOS worked with a MassMEP subcontractor to achieve ISO certification.

Results:

- * Achieved ISO certification.
- * Increased sales by 24 percent.
- * Reduced lead time from 8 weeks to 2 days.

Testimonial:

"I am extremely proud of what we have done. To have General Dynamics use us as a model is humbling."

Bruce Bodge, President